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An outline of trade union history  
in Great Britain, the United States  
and Canada...by Margaret Mackintosh.



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DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR OF CANADA

AN OUTLINE OF TRADE UNION HISTORY  
IN GREAT BRITAIN, THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

With Special Emphasis on the Causes  
Leading to the Present Division in  
the Canadian Labour Movement

By

Margaret Mackintosh



O C T O B E R , 1 9 3 8



An Outline of Trade Union History in Great Britain, the United States and Canada with Special Emphasis on the Causes Leading to the Present Division in the Canadian Labour Movement.(x)

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Although there were trade unions in Britain as far back as the beginning of the 18th century, trade unionism may be said to have developed in Britain as a result of the "Industrial Revolution", that series of economic changes between 1760 and 1820 which transformed England from a largely agricultural country into the workshop of the world. Among these changes, in addition to the inventions which made possible the application of power to industry and large-scale machine production, were improvements in transportation facilities and a widening of markets, the enclosure of the common fields resulting in the dispossession of large numbers of the rural population and their migration to the new industrial towns, the supersession of many handicrafts by machine work bringing distress to large classes of workers, and the increase in economic and political power of those who were furnishing capital to develop industry under the new conditions.

The wage-earners who were congregated in factories found that public opinion had turned against the old system of having justices of the peace or other public authority fix wages and they had perforce to rely upon themselves to better their condition. Realizing the helplessness of a single wage-earner dependent on his day's labour against an employer with capital and able to choose from many applicants, the workers met to discuss how they might increase their wages and began to form societies. Parliament resorted to repressive measures and in 1799 and 1800 prohibited combinations to alter conditions of work. That the Combination Acts applied also to employers was considered to be even-handed justice but there were numerous convictions of workmen and none of employers though there were known to be associations of employers.

Perhaps the briefest comment that can be made in appraisal of the claim that is sometimes advanced for putting employers and work-people on the same footing under the law is in the words of Anatole France:

The law in the majesty of its equality alike forbids rich and poor to sleep on park benches.

Identical treatment is not always equitable treatment.

But the Combination Acts were attacked by sympathizers from outside the working class and in 1824 they were repealed. During the agitation to extend the franchise, the workers took part and when the

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(x) An address, in extended form, by Margaret Mackintosh of the Department of Labour of Canada at the Canadian Institute of Economics and Politics, Lake Couchiching, August 12, 1938.



Reform Act was passed in 1832, although they were not given the vote, they had learned the value of concerted action. In 1829, the cotton spinners formed a national trade union and in 1830, the first attempt was made to organize all trade unions in one single organization, the National Association for the protection of labour. Both these organizations were short-lived. In 1834, the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union was formed largely under the influence of Robert Owen, an employer and idealist, the father of the co-operative movement and the first to call himself a socialist. A wave of enthusiasm swept three quarters of a million into membership, some from the local unions but most were new recruits. But the Grand National was ahead of its time, sectional disputes arose and it was speedily attacked by employers either through insisting on their workmen signing "the document," as it was called, a promise to give up their membership or through obtaining heavy sentences for offences often trivial.

It was in 1834, too, that some labourers in the village of Tolpuddle in Dorset formed the first agricultural labourers' union in protest against the progressive reduction of their wages from 9 to 6s. a week. Six of the leaders were convicted and transported to Australia for having taken an illegal oath in joining the union. This incident is of peculiar interest to Canadians since after the public outcry had forced the Government to pardon them, five of these Tolpuddle Martyrs came to Canada and settled in or near the present city of London.

Then came the Chartist movement which, like all radical movements, drew to itself all the economic unrest of the time. When Chartist disappeared in 1848, the great distress of the "Hungry Forties" had left its mark and the political movement was turned to co-operation and to trade unionism on moderate reformist lines. For the first time the unions became almost entirely defensive organizations and began to provide benefits for their members. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers was organized in 1850-51, the first big amalgamation of trade unions of a variety of skilled trades and the model for other unions, its chief characteristics being high dues and high benefits. The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners followed and from about 1858 onwards trades councils were formed in the larger towns to unite all the local unions in the district.

These marks of progress, however, brought fresh attacks through the law. Strikers were charged with breach of contract, at that time a crime for a workman, but for an employer only a civil wrong. Trade unions were regarded as conspiracies and the law gave their funds no protection. These restrictions stimulated them to action and in 1864 the Glasgow Trades Council called a conference to discuss their difficulties. Then came a series of lockouts and a second conference of trade union leaders and in 1867 an organization, the Amalgamated Trades Conference was set up. When workmen were convicted of destroying machinery in Sheffield, public attention was drawn still more to the trade unions and the Government appointed a commission to inquire into their operations. The idea back of the inquiry was the suppression of trade unionism but the result was the opposite.



The trade union movement was fortunate in having several able leaders, cautious but with considerable administrative ability, who gathered evidence and presented it to the commission. The inquiry showed such outrages as those at Sheffield to be quite exceptional and trade unionism was vindicated. The Master and Servant Act was revised and imprisonment abolished as a punishment for breach of contract.

In 1868, the first regular Trades Union Congress met but some of the leaders held aloof until 1871 when the first Parliamentary Committee of the Congress was appointed.

In that year, the Trade Union Act gave the unions a definite legal status and protection for their funds but another enactment of the same year which practically prohibited picketing roused the trade union world to action and at the General Election of 1874, several trade union candidates went to the poll and two of the miners' leaders were elected, the first labour members of the House of Commons. The Reform Act of 1867 had given the franchise to town householders and so added a large body of workers to the electorate. Shortly after these successes, the unions suffered from the great industrial and commercial crisis of 1879 but by that time they had attained sufficient stability to survive a difficult period.

In the early 80's, new ideas were abroad and the pioneer organizations of British socialism were formed, the Social Democratic Federation and the Fabian Society. One result was the aid given by middle class sympathizers in unionizing the unskilled workers in many industries. Except in the mines, the latter had been unorganized and had been regarded by many union leaders as unorganizable.

First came a successful strike of unorganized match girls in 1888, then the newly organized London Gas Workers' and General Labourers' Union won an eight-hour day without a struggle. The next year the London Dock Strike, one of the landmarks in trade union history, taught labour that its power did not lie necessarily in the skilled trades or in the political aims of the labour leaders. Although the ostensible purpose of the strike was to do away with the terrible evils of casual labour, the attention of most of the strikers was on their demand for 6d. an hour and a minimum of 4 hours' work a day. Led by Ben Tillett, Tom Mann and John Burns, the strike attracted great public sympathy and sufficient financial support to provide strike pay. Traffic of the port was paralyzed for over four weeks while 10,000 labourers remained away from the gates where they had fought each morning for work. The men's demands were granted, but an even more important result was the tremendous increase in the number of unions of semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

These new unions were unable to pay the high dues common in the skilled trades. Moreover, they aimed to be all inclusive and for that reason favoured low contributions. At this time no attempt was made by the unions of skilled workers to broaden their basis of



membership but the unions of unskilled had come to stay and the Trades Union Congress was forced to take note of them.

In the 90's there was a long coal strike and a lockout in the engineering trade. One result was the formation in 1899 of the General Federation of Trade Unions to bring together the unions for mutual financial assistance in strikes. In 1902, in connection with a strike of workers on the Taff Vale railway, came a judgment of the House of Lords declaring trade unions liable in damages for the acts of the members. Once again, in the face of direct attack, the whole movement rallied and, in the Election of 1906, 29 labour members were returned to the British Parliament.

After 1900 prices began to rise and until 1910 wages declined steadily causing considerable industrial unrest. Seamen's and dockers' strikes resulted in important victories and a railway strike brought about in 1913 the amalgamation of three railway unions. The National Union of Railwaymen "to secure the complete organization of all workers employed in connection with any railway in the United Kingdom" became the New Model for trade unions in the 20th century as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers had been in the 50's.

In 1914, industrial hostilities were suspended but when government control of industry ended after the war, prices and wages rose sharply and trade union membership increased. Characteristics of the post-war years in Britain have been a tendency towards amalgamation of rival unions, organization on an industrial, rather than craft basis, and the making of national agreements with employers to cover the whole country while allowing for local variations.

The Trades Union Congress in 1927 adopted a report in favour of reducing the number of trade unions by amalgamation and of organization by industry. However, the General Council of the Congress, which in 1921 replaced the Parliamentary Committee, found that as it was impossible to define any fixed boundary of industry, it was impracticable to formulate a scheme of organization by industry that could be applied to all industries.

Trade union organization will have to be gradually re-moulded and its present form adapted rather than transformed to meet the new conditions.

As regards strikes, in the old days strikes were brought on by unorganized workers protesting against a particular grievance and organization was likely to follow the strike. In organized industries, the unions resort to a strike only when negotiations fail but the right to strike is held to be fundamental. It was interesting to note the sort of shock that many in Canada received when in a Manitoba case in 1931, the Privy Council pointed out that the remedy for violation of a collective agreement, when adjustment could not be made by the parties, lay not in the courts but in a strike. That such an august body should appear to encourage strikes was to some incomprehensible--perhaps to others enlightening.



### Canada and the U.S.A.

In Canada, the first trade unions were formed, in all probability, by men who had been members of unions in the Old Country. Of the earliest unions little is known. In 1816, a Nova Scotia Act, like the Imperial statute of 1800, prohibited combinations and referred to the numbers of workmen in Halifax and other parts of the province who "by unlawful meetings and combinations endeavoured to regulate the rates of wages....." It is likely that there were trade unions of a kind in Nova Scotia at that date, probably printers and men in the shipyards. At a meeting of the National Typographical Society in New York in 1837, there was a fraternal delegate from Nova Scotia.

Printers' societies existed in Quebec Province in 1827 and the printers in Toronto organized in 1832. In 1834, the Montreal Gazette reported resolutions of the Master Carpenters of that city referring to a new organization of workmen as follows:

We now, in consequence of the present combinations consider ourselves called upon to make a stand against their arbitrary and injurious conduct and after mature and calm deliberation, have resolved that the long established custom of this place previous to last year is the best, and that it shall remain unaltered; we have, therefore, agreed that from the first of April to the first of November a day's work shall consist of eleven working hours.....

We are further unanimous in declaring our opinion that the Society calling itself the "Mechanics' Protective Society", is calculated to produce the worst consequences; such a body of men cannot be considered competent to what they have undertaken, neither are they likely to confine themselves to decent and becoming order, they are therefore dangerous to the peace and safety of good citizens.

In the 50's the English Amalgamated Society of Engineers and the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters established locals in Canada which they were to maintain for many years. During the 60's and early 70's the number of local unions increased rapidly. Printers, shoemakers, iron moulders, coopers, bricklayers and masons, stonemasons, painters, machinists and blacksmiths, shipwrights and caulkers, sailmakers, longshoremen, bakers and tailors had unions in some places.

Before the business depression in the 70's destroyed some of the unions, important steps had been taken in two directions: (1) to draw the Canadian and American unions in the same trades together and (2) to link the Canadian unions in a federal organization.

In these years there was more north and south traffic than east and west--between the Maritime Provinces and New England and



between Ontario and Quebec and New York and other States. Men went from one country to the other in search of work.

As in Britain, but somewhat later, societies of skilled workmen were formed in the United States in the 18th century. The printers of Philadelphia struck in 1786 for weekly wage of \$6 and later the carpenters united to refuse to work more than 12 hours a day. Other societies had a brief existence but it was only after 1825 when the country had recovered from the depression following the Napoleonic wars and, with better roads and canals, markets were expanding that the American labour movement may be said to have begun. After the railway construction of the 50's and the Civil War, the movement took on a national character and, through co-operation with the Canadian unions, became international.

Before the 30's, the unions did not attempt collective bargaining; they merely determined the rate, the price, it was called, at which they would work and pledged each other not to work for less. This method was copied from their employers who as merchants were accustomed to fix prices and agree with each other to abide by them. The modern notion of collective bargaining developed naturally from this when, during a strike or lockout, the workmen appointed a committee to negotiate a settlement.

In 1833, the first central union was formed in New York City and others followed in this decade. The trade societies became definitely trade unions and not merely benevolent societies and there were numerous strikes for better wages and in support of the 10-hour day. During the panic of 1837 and resulting unemployment, workmen turned to politics and co-operation. It is hardly necessary to point out that trade union membership fluctuates with employment. The unions cannot make jobs and when the demand for labour falls off, the jobless have to give up paying their membership dues.

Meantime, employers' associations were organized to combat labour and the law of conspiracy was resorted to but, in 1842, a Massachusetts court held that trade unions were legal organizations and this bogey was laid to rest at least for a time.

In 1852, the National Typographical Union was founded and in 1859 the moulders and the machinists and blacksmiths both formed national bodies. The moulders organized largely in protest against the desperate condition of the stove moulders' trade arising from competition among the manufacturers after the opening up of a national market.

#### International Unions

The Moulders' Union was the first to take in Canadian unions. When it was formed there were moulders' unions in Toronto, Hamilton, Brantford, London and Quebec. In 1861, delegates from the first four cities attended the convention in Cincinnati and the name of the organization was changed to the Iron Moulders' Union of America



In 1854, a resolution was adopted by the National Typographical Union in favour of some plan by which the membership cards of Canadian unionists might be accepted by American unions. Annually for ten years the matter cropped up. In 1860, it was decided to approach the Canadian unions. The reasons were stated thus:

It will, if we succeed in bringing these unions under our jurisdiction, strengthen both our numbers and our finances; it will do away with the difficulties that now exist in regard to the exchange of cards.....and it will be the means of strengthening the bonds of fellowship and good feeling that should exist between ourselves and our sister countries.

In 1865, the constitution was revised to take in the Canadian unions and charters were issued, first to the St. John Local No. 85 and, second, to the Toronto Local No. 91. Others followed.

The Knights of St. Crispin, a remarkable association of shoemakers organized in 1867, entered Canada at Montreal. In 1869, there were lodges in Toronto, St. John, Quebec, Guelph, Hamilton and Windsor. Formed in protest against what they considered the abuse of new machinery and the factory system which seemed to take from them their craft and old-time independence, the organization grew rapidly--400 lodges in 1872 with the largest membership of any American union before 1875. But the Crispins were fighting a losing battle against changes in markets, mechanical methods, the organization of the industry and in the supply of labour. They passed out of existence in 1878 with none to give the lead to an organization adapted to new conditions. An experiment of the Crispins of special interest in Canada was their venture into co-operative manufacture in St. John in 1869. Like the early English unions, the American unionists of the 60's were firm believers in co-operation of both producers and consumers.

#### Railroad Brotherhoods

It was in the 60's, too, that railroad employees, now one of the most highly organized classes of workers, began to organize in Canada and the United States. The four railroad brotherhoods of engineers, firemen, conductors and trainmen are unlike other trade unions in many respects but their character, like that of others, was determined to a large extent by the working conditions of their members.

In 1850, there were only 40 miles of railway in operation in Canada but by the end of the decade more than 2,000 miles had been built, one object being to link Montreal and Portland to enable ocean traffic to go through Portland during the winter and to give



Boston and New York connection with the Canadas and with Nova Scotia. Buffalo and Detroit had a similar interest in a line through western Ontario. So the Grand Trunk from Portland to Sarnia and the Great Western from Niagara Falls to Detroit were begun and the Intercolonial Railway was added to.

Another factor making for community of interest between American and Canadian railway employees was the influence of American methods on railway construction and operation in Canada--the gauge, rolling stock, organization of construction companies, the grant of lands to promote construction and, unfortunately, the political influence wielded by the companies.

In 1863, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers was organized and lodges were established in Belleville and Hamilton the next year. In 1868, the conductors organized and in that year three locals were set up in Canada. The firemen followed in 1873, the trainmen ten years later, the first lodge of Canadian trainmen being formed in Moncton in 1885. These classes of railway workers were thus organized soon after railway operation began and more promptly than most Canadian unions joined with their fellows in the United States. The railway industry pays little heed to the international boundary and Canadian railway workers are more closely linked with the American than in any other industry.

Unlike most early trade unions in Canada, these organizations of men in train service were started as benefit societies. Employed in hazardous occupations the men had difficulty in getting insurance. This feature of their organizations has been maintained but early in their history they developed the bargaining side too and for many years have worked under collective agreements with the railway companies.

It is impossible to take time even to trace the origin of other international unions, as they are called, but enough has been said to indicate why they became international. As in most other fields of history, the action taken was the result of the circumstances at the time but the reasons varied from one trade to another to some extent. Underlying all were the common bonds of blood and language, the sectionism in Canada arising from geographic conditions and the easier communication between north and south than between east and west. Canadian industrial development was about 30 years behind that of the United States and new Canadian industries drew craftsmen not only from Britain but from the American states. Iron and steel workers were brought to Montreal in 1856 from the United States "the worker there being accustomed to the peculiar tempering of the steel required for our cold climate". After the Civil War, there was a heavy immigration from the United States, some of which represented Canadians who had emigrated in the 50's. Cotton operatives came from New England in 1878 and boot and shoe workers early in the 70's while large numbers of mechanics from the United States entered Canada after the panic of 1873.



### Toronto Trades Assembly

While the general prosperity of the 60's was encouraging the formation of local and national unions in the United States and the Canadian locals were uniting with American, the unions in Canada also began to draw together, partly to press for a nine-hour day and partly to urge changes in the law in Ontario and Quebec especially that relating to breach of contract of employment which was the old English law.

In 1871, about 15 unions formed the Toronto Trades Assembly and the next year unions in several towns organized nine-hour leagues similar to the eight-hour leagues in the United States. From these there developed in Hamilton and Ottawa trades and labour councils, federal organizations linking together the local unions in all trades.

There is record of a convention in Hamilton in 1872 where a resolution was adopted to form a Canadian Labour Protective Association to promote nine-hour leagues, to provide reading rooms and libraries and what would now be called facilities for leisure-time activities, that is, leisure time after a day of 10 hours or more.

### Canadian Labour Union

In 1873, when printers in Toronto and other cities struck for a nine-hour day, about 24 men were arrested on a charge of criminal conspiracy under the old law in force in England before 1824 and still in force in Ontario. The need for Dominion as well as provincial legislation was apparent. The Toronto Trades Assembly took the lead in organizing the Canadian Labour Union which held annual meetings from 1873 to 1877 with delegates present in the first year from eight Ontario towns representing 30 local unions. With the decline in business in the middle 70's, the Canadian Labour Union and the central councils in Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton disappeared.

A remarkable influence was exercised by the Canadian Labour Union through the Ontario Workman, the first labour paper which began publication in 1872, through mass meetings and direct representations to the Dominion and provincial Governments and to individual members of Parliament. That there were three Dominion and three Ontario elections in the 70's may have made the legislators lend a more willing ear to the trade unions of that day. To the Toronto Trades Assembly must be given credit for the Dominion legislation freeing trade unionists from liability to prosecution for conspiracy but the Canadian Labour Union was successful in having the law on conspiracy and intimidation ameliorated and the provincial laws regarding breach of contract revised.

Among other measures urged by the Canadian Labour Union were the creation of Government machinery for the settlement of labour disputes, the establishment of a bureau to publish labour statistics



and the adoption of a Government-supervised system of apprenticeship with advisory boards of employers and employees. Many years were to elapse before these objects were attained.

One point in connection with the Canadian Labour Union is of special interest at this time when labour is being organized in industries where there has been little or no experience with trade unions or collective labour relations and where employers and employed have to learn how to work together as they have each to learn to work in their own organization. Time is needed to develop the discipline that holds any organization together but the leaders of the early unions in Canada were mostly men who had some knowledge of the working of unions in the Old Country and with sufficient of the spirit of adventure in them to send them out to a new land. So while they showed no lack of independence or firmness in their demands for new legislation or in their fight for the nine-hour day, they showed also that sense of responsibility that grows with knowledge and experience if not with age. Indicative of this are the words of the first president of the Canadian Labour Union in his address at the opening session:

I urge upon you the necessity of being wise and moderate in your deliberations and enactments and let those who are watching your movements at this first Canadian labour congress be compelled to admit that we are honest, earnest and prudent workers.

When business in Canada and the United States picked up again in the 80's, the unions in both countries were able to get a secure foothold in at least some industries. There are two organizations which flourished in these years to which I should like to make reference--both had a remarkable success for a time, then, unable to cope with new conditions, disappeared, but both left a goodly heritage to the Canadian labour movement.

#### Provincial Workmen's Association

The first organization of workmen in Canada which extended beyond local bounds and held its own for many years was the Provincial Workmen's Association of Nova Scotia established in 1879 to organize miners' unions. Formed during a strike against a wage-cut, the Association organized its first lodge two days later with 126 members. For almost 38 years it held the miners of Nova Scotia together in a notably successful campaign for legislation for safety measures and other matters of vital concern to the workpeople.

After every colliery in the province had been organized, the P.W.A. also took under its wing unions of other workers. So boot and shoe workers, garment workers, iron and steel workers and steam and electric railway employees, longshoremen and retail clerks were given charters. Later, this step was considered a mistake. In the words of the secretary, a "federation is the only proper way of



linking up the different industries of any country" but in the early days, the P.W.A. was the only central labour body in the province and in the late 90's the readiness to accept other workers was due, in large measure, to the threat of the Knights of Labour to enter Nova Scotia.

The P.W.A. is a notable example of the truth that for most institutions, and trade unions among them, a highly important factor may be personalities and not form or structure. It was fortunate in the two secretaries who for 19 years each wielded a strong influence. Devoting his whole time to the work, the secretary was the chief organizer and adviser of the lodges. Difficulties beset the Association at times, company stores creating serious trouble and the Knights of Labour making inroads between 1897 and 1900. These disposed of, the membership of the Association increased to 8,000 in 1905 with 43 lodges.

But in 1907 came the United Mine Workers of America and the beginning of the end for the P.W.A. Some were for affiliating with the new union, others for fighting it and improving their own organization. The dispute continued for several years and involved the central bodies with which these unions were affiliated--the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada and the Canadian Federation of Labour. The Association had agreements with the mine operators but with the rapid increase in the cost of living during the war years and the men's demand for higher wages, its difficulties increased. Finally, a Dominion Royal Commission in 1917 persuaded the leaders of the two organizations to unite to form a new one--the Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia and the P.W.A. was dissolved. By 1919, the new organization had become District 26 of the United Mine Workers of America.

#### Knights of Labour

In contrast to the P.W.A., the Noble Order of the Knights of Labour had a spectacular success in both the United States and Canada reaching its zenith in the middle 80's. It began its career in 1869 as a secret Order among the garment cutters of Philadelphia and for nine years grew slowly behind the veil of secrecy. The Knights were the first in the United States to develop a national organization from the local unions. Before it, attempts had been made to organize from the top down.

With elaborate ritual which, in itself always has some fascination, the Order drew not only from the trade unions but from among the unorganized and unskilled, the numbers and proportion of whom had increased through the use of machinery in many industries--in boots and shoes, cigars, iron and steel and in the railway car shops. The Knights considered the craft unions too narrow in spirit and scope and declared for one big organization of all workers, skilled and unskilled. The first local assemblies of the Order were trade bodies. By 1878, however, "mixed" assemblies were being formed and the Order admitted to membership men of any occupation barring



only bankers, lawyers and saloon-keepers.

The remarkable success of the Knights was due, of course, to several causes, perhaps the greatest being that when the first General Assembly was held in 1878, the unions had learned the value of a central organization after unemployment and wage-cuts had almost destroyed them and the great railway strikes of 1877 culminating in riots and bringing in of the militia and federal troops had broken the ranks of the railroad brotherhoods and turned the public in many communities against labour, awakening it to the danger of strikes while not enlightening it as to the real cause of them.

A characteristic of the Order which stood it in good stead at first but was a strong factor in its downfall was its attitude towards strikes. After the disastrous strikes of the 70's, the Knights were imbued with the idea that strikes were bound to fail and should be discouraged and negotiations or arbitration, as they called it, depended on to settle differences. The older leaders, including Terence Powderly, the Grand Master, never changed these views and were incapable, to a great degree, of giving proper leadership in a strike crisis. They did not see that there might be need for both negotiations and strikes or discriminate between timely and well-organized strikes and others. Moreover, in those days when new unions were being formed, their recognition by the employers was of prime importance to the workmen. On a question involving a principle such as this, each side might well be sincere in its belief that it was right and the point was one that, in some cases, could only be settled by education or by economic pressure and not by the arbitration the Knights professed to favour.

A strike of telegraphers of the United States and Canada in 1883, the first on a national scale in which the Order was involved, was called off because of lack of financial support. The men went back to work forced to sign "the iron-clad", a promise to give up all connection with any organization which attempted to regulate conditions of employment.

As an illustration of the development of the English language the name applied to this anti-union contract is interesting. "The document" it was called by the English employers, then "the iron-clad" by the unions, and now "the yellow-dog."

The failure of the telegraphers' strike caused some temporary change in the strike policy of the Knights and in 1884, just when a two-year slump in business was beginning, the railway shopmen waged a successful strike against the Union Pacific and other railway strikes followed notably against Jay Gould's railway system. It was after these successes that the growth of the Order became so rapid that the officers were unable to handle the numbers, the membership rising from 50,000 to 700,000 between 1883 and 1886. Powderly saw the danger in unconsolidated gains with many members unused to the discipline of association and leaders inexperienced in handling their men or dealing with employers. But then came failure in other



strikes, one in the Chicago packing houses where Powderly ordered the men back to work just when they thought they were winning their fight against the 10-hour day. The suffering of the strikers' families led him to call it off but his incompetence in the face of a strike was shown in this and other instances.

Further, the Order, like all the other earlier organizations, did not confine itself wholly to trade union principles, and the study of co-operation, the reading of essays and talk about education, insurance and public questions began to bore men who were more interested in wages and hours as working conditions worsened through the 80's. The high idealism of the leaders had become too remote from the realities of changing conditions. The dream of the Knights, the organization of all workers in one Order with strong central control like that of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union in England in 1834, was too ambitious for its resources. So the Order began to decline after 1886, though in Canada it survived in comparative strength for some years, due partly to its unaggressive strike policy in a country less highly developed industrially and partly to its readiness to set up mixed assemblies where craft workers were few.

The first assembly of the Knights in Canada was organized in Hamilton in 1881 and the General Assembly was held in that city in 1885. At its peak in Canada in 1888, the Order had seven district assemblies with about 250 locals. In Quebec, it met remarkable success after difficulties with the Roman Catholic Church were got over. In the United States, the Church had objected to the secret nature of the Order, the oath and parts of the ritual and under Powderly, a Roman Catholic, the secrecy was abandoned, a simple promise substituted for the vow and the ritual purged of all the scriptural language. But in Quebec in 1884 the Order was opposed by Archbishop Taschereau and at his solicitation it was condemned by the Pope. The Roman Catholic members began to desert the ranks but Cardinal Gibbons in the United States supported by Cardinal Manning in England protested and the ban was lifted in 1887 and the Order achieved in Quebec a membership of 16,000 in 40 local assemblies.

#### American Federation of Labour

Meantime in the United States, the craft unions which had survived the 70's, resentful of the Knights' policy of including the unskilled and inspired by the example of the British Trades Union Congress, got together in 1881 to form a national organization to promote their interests through legislation. Samuel Gompers of the cigar makers' union was chairman of the committee on organization.

The new body was named the Federation of Organized Trades and Labour Unions of the United States and Canada, thus including both the trade unions and the Knights. The platform, copied from the Trades Union Congress and its Parliamentary Committee, was drawn up



annually until 1875  
attended only by a  
score or so of delegates  
and

by the trade unionists and the resolutions were nearly all concerned with legislation. This organization met again only in 1886 to merge with the American Federation of Labour.

The "Great Upheaval" in American industry in the 80's had begun. Railway mileage increased and communication services were adapted to the national needs, the use of steam power and machinery was greatly extended, factory workers increased from 2,700,000 to 4,250,000 and there were nearly twice as many immigrants as in the previous decade. Drawn from eastern and southern Europe where lower living standards prevailed, these new arrivals and the large numbers from the farm and small towns who made up the new workers made labour competition very keen.

Conditions of work were bad and on a smaller scale this was equally true in Canada, as the Royal Commission on Capital and Labour revealed between 1886 and 1889. Children as young as nine years were working in factories in Canada. In some cases, hours were as many as 11 in one day though 10 was supposed to be the rule. Street railway employees were sometimes required to work from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. and usually for not less than 12 hours. Factory ventilation was poor and dust plentiful, particularly in the cotton and tobacco factories. Discipline in the workshop was arbitrary and rigid and the iron-clad agreement and truck system were sources of increasing irritation.

Employers were preoccupied with expanding their plants and organizing their industries and were reluctant to spend where they could not see an immediate profit. Many had risen from the ranks of labour and some were hard-headed and what they, themselves, called "practical". There was little social conscience and no tradition among employers as to the treatment of workers--it had not had time to develop. In this connection, I might refer to that "rugged individualism" of which we have been wont to boast on this Continent. "Ruthless selfishness" it might be called in many cases. Higher qualities of mind and soul are required to co-operate intelligently with one's fellows than to stand alone on a safe footing.

The organization of labour in Canada was commented on by the Royal Commission on Capital and Labour in 1889 in the following words:

Among others matters brought out.....is the interesting and important bearing on the labour question of the influence of workingmen's organizations. Nothing could be more striking than the contrast furnished between organized districts and others where as yet the principles of a trade organization are little known and still less acted upon. And if the progress that has been made towards uniting capital and labour in cities that are comparatively well represented in the ranks of labour bodies is to be taken as a criterion of the usefulness of such



societies, we may well believe that they are destined to be a very important factor in the solution of the labour problem.

Numerous strikes broke out both in the United States and Canada in these years. So the trade unions in the United States called another convention in December, 1886, and the American Federation of Labour was formed with Samuel Gompers as president. The energy and perseverance of Gompers, his self-confidence and readiness to sacrifice himself had much to do with the success of the organization. Quite distinct from the Federation of 1881 and avoiding its mistake of emphasizing legislation above all, there was close relation in purpose and leaders between the two organizations and the American Federation of Labour now dates its history from the 1881 Convention.

The council of the new Federation was to watch and initiate "labour measures directly affecting the interests of the workers" and to "secure the unification of all labour organizations." It was pledged to "strict recognition of the autonomy of each trade." To care for local interests common to all trades, city central organizations and state federations were provided for. The legislative interests of labour were, for the most part, left to the state federations of labour. No doubt one reason for this was that in the states resides the power to enact legislation affecting working conditions in many, if not most, industries. The revenue was to come from a per capita tax of six cents a year and from charter fees. At the present time, the national and international unions in the American Federation of Labour pay annually 12 cents for each member who is at work and paying dues to the union. Local trade and federal labour unions pay a tax of 35 cents a month per member. City centrals and state federations of labour pay an annual tax of \$10 each. Dues and benefits of the unions are their own concern and vary from one union to another and often between different locals of the same union but the Federation has encouraged high dues and benefits as an inducement to membership.

✓ The Federation made only slow headway but the determination of the leaders to keep it free from entangling alliances with the Socialist Labour Party and others kept it on its course as a loose federation of autonomous unions. The Knights of Labour were declining and the principles of "pure and simple trade unionism," to use Gompers' phrase, gaining ground. In 1892, the strongest unions, the carpenters, cigar-makers, iron and steel workers, iron moulders, and printers had agreements with employers in some districts.

Then came a rude awakening. On the expiration of its agreement with the Carnegie Steel Company at Homestead, Pa., in 1892, the iron and steel workers' union found the manager unfriendly. Negotiations failed and a strike was called. For the first time, an American trade union was confronted with a modern manufacturing corporation and one which had hired 300 detectives as guards. In the battle that followed at least half a dozen men on both sides were killed and others seriously wounded. The state militia were brought



in and the cause of unionism was lost in the Pittsburgh district for many years. But American labour was stirred by the Homestead strike as it had never been before, and by the later strikes of metal miners in Idaho, switchmen in Buffalo and coal miners in Tennessee, all of which were lost and in all of which there was bloodshed through conflict with armed guards of the companies and with state militia.

In 1896, the American labour movement was represented by about 400,000 members compared with about one million ten years before. The Knights were out of the picture and there remained only the Federation of about seven national unions, the railroad brotherhoods and several other unaffiliated unions. In that year, the Federation adopted a report from Gompers on "the philosophy of trade unionism." This statement emphasized the need for concentrating on immediate objects: wages, hours, healthier working conditions, education and the regulation of immigration. These aims were based on the interests of the skilled worker and in their struggle to attain them, the craft unions developed that fear of dual unions which has made the term synonymous with treason in their world.

A notable step forward was made in 1898 by the U.M.W.A. in getting an agreement with the operators to establish an Interstate Joint Conference for collective bargaining in the competitive states of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Western Pennsylvania. In these states, it was agreed that there should be no competition on the basis of labour costs. Later, conditions in the outlying unionized districts were based on the agreement made by the Interstate Conference and it became the main stabilizing factor in the soft coal industry for an almost unbroken period of 40 years. The U.M.W.A. had been formed by an amalgamation of a national union and the miners' district assembly of the Knights brought about by pressure from the rank and file. It maintained the industrial form of organization developed through long connection with the Knights of Labour.

With the boom from the Spanish-American War and prosperity in the early years of the century, the membership of the A. F. of L. grew rapidly. Two important strikes took place in these years, one against the U. S. Steel Corporation by the skilled men, who were only a small proportion of the workers, which ended in failure and the collapse of the union, and the other by the anthracite coal miners in 1902 for an eight-hour day, higher wages and recognition of the union. The soft coal miners contributed over one million dollars to the hard coal miners during this strike but they refused to strike in sympathy since they would have had to violate their agreement. Unusual support was also given by the public and President Roosevelt brought pressure on the operators to accept arbitration. It was during this strike that the president of the Philadelphia and Reading Railway, an owner of large coal mines, wrote the oft-quoted words:

The rights and interests of the labouring man are best protected, not by the labour agitator, but by the Christian men to whom God has given the property rights of this country.



The strike of the hard coal miners was especially important because it gave the union its first strong foothold in the anthracite field which is now highly organized. The strike, too, was of special significance in Canada--the demand for Nova Scotia coal jumped and, when it began to decline, the P.W.A. was able to get its first agreement with the Dominion Coal Company in Cape Breton in 1905.

In the early years of the century began the jurisdictional disputes which were to take up so much of the time of the A.F. of L.--that is, differences between unions as to the right to organize certain classes of workers. Changes in materials, processes and tools added to the difficulty. Closely allied were the questions of organization by industry rather than by craft and the organization of the unskilled workers who threatened skilled workers by strike-breaking or replacing them. Some unions made up mostly of unskilled men had been organized among cement workers, hod-carriers and building labourers and maintenance-of-way employees. The Federation also undertook to include in craft unions certain classes of helpers and to organize federal labour unions, the members of which were to be allocated later to their appropriate union.

After 1904 came reverses. Business declined and employers' associations were organized to fight the unions. The machinists' union, the moulders' and the bridge and structural iron workers' union lost their agreements. The blame for the disruption in relations was not all on one side. The unions had not yet learned to abide by their agreements and individual employers found means to evade or misinterpret the terms. In Canada, between 1905 and 1911, the structural iron workers, machinists, moulders and plumbers in Winnipeg lost their organizations in unsuccessful strikes for the nine-hour day and 35 or 40 cents an hour. Heavy damages were awarded by the Courts in two actions brought against these unions. The bitterness engendered by these disputes was to reveal itself in the metal trades strike in Winnipeg in 1919, the precursor of the general strike of that year.

On another flank, the American Federation of Labour was attacked. The Western Federation of Miners had broken away in 1897 and in 1905 joined with other groups to form the Industrial Workers of the World based on socialism and revolutionary tactics. But the I.W.W. made little impression on the A.F. of L. except to emphasize the claims of the workers in certain industries to an organization not on strictly craft lines.

An attempt by the Federation to meet the need for joint action was the grouping of allied unions in departments. In 1908, a Building Trades Department was set up. Later, the Metal Trades and Railway Employees' Departments were formed. The latter comprises nine international unions divided into three autonomous sections of which the shop crafts form one. They are organized in their appropriate unions of machinists, boiler-makers, etc. Division No. 4 of this Department has jurisdiction over the railway mechanical trades in Canada and has agreements with the Canadian railway companies.



After 1910 when prices were rising, the recent immigrants, unorganized though they were, waged successful strikes in textiles, clothing and mines and forced themselves on the attention of the skilled workers. The international union in the women's clothing industry became a semi-industrial union holding together various crafts and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, an industrial union, was organized in the men's clothing industry by former members of another union. In these formerly sweated industries, with workers scattered over a multitude of small shops, the unions have made a notable contribution to industrial peace, the raising of the standard of living and the education of their members. Since the A.C.W.A. was a dual union, it remained outside the American Federation until 1933 when an agreement defined the field of the Amalgamated and the United Garment Workers.

In 1914, the membership of the A.F. of L. was over two million, in 1920, over four million. But with the relaxation of government regulation of industry and the hard times of 1921-22, the number dropped to over one million. The same conditions obtained in Canada on a smaller scale.

In 1919 there was a steel strike in the United States. The A.F. of L. appointed a committee from the 24 unions connected with the industry to organize the men and demand the abolition of the 12-hour day and the right to collective bargaining. The strike was called--and called off three months later, a failure largely due to the U.S. Steel Corporation's determination to prevent unionization at any cost and to jealousy among the unions. But the influence of public opinion was strong enough to bring about the eight-hour day in American steel plants in 1923.

In Sydney, Nova Scotia, in 1923, when business conditions were none too good and after a disorderly strike in February had left considerable unrest, the steel workers struck for an increase in wages and for recognition of the union. The refusal of the company in January to join with the employees in applying for a board of conciliation and investigation under the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act had increased the ill-feeling between the company and its workmen. Another cause of dissatisfaction was the long working day, 11 hours by day or 13 by night. The union covered only a small proportion of the industry but practically all the employees ceased work and in their irritation they went too far. There were some disorders and an attempt was made to prevent maintenance men entering the plants, an act in violation of the rules of the union which require due notice of a strike and the plant to be left so that it can be readily started again. The strikers were driven off by company and city police and, on the requisition of a county judge, the militia were sent in to maintain order and provincial police arrived soon after. In protest against the use of the militia and provincial police, the coal miners employed by the same companies struck. For this breach of their agreement, the charter of District 26 of the United Mine Workers was revoked by the International President and a provisional district created with new officers.

→ There were other reasons for Lewis' ad ...



Gradually, both steel and coal men went back to work. One result of the strike was a change in the Militia Act to stipulate that troops can be requisitioned in aid of the civil power only by the Attorney-General of the province concerned. Not until 1930 did the steel workers in Canada get the eight-hour shift.

In 1933, the United States National Recovery Act declared that employees had the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, free from interference or coercion by employers. With this statutory charter of liberty the workers flocked into unions. The A.F. of L. rose to nearly four million members in 18 months. In the mines and in women's and men's clothing industries, the three unions which had dropped most during the depression, membership rose 132% between 1933 and 1935 while the draft unions gained 13%. There also grew up unions, independent of the A.F. of L., in the automobile and rubber industries.

In October, 1935, the A.F. of L. at its annual convention rejected by 18,000 to 10,900 a motion to recognize the right of workers to organize in industrial unions and grant

"unrestricted charters which guarantee the right to accept into membership all workers employed in the industry or establishment without fear of being compelled to destroy unity of action through recognition of jurisdictional claims made by national or international unions."

On November 9 the Committee for Industrial Organization was organized by the United Mine Workers of America, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, International Ladies' Garment Workers, Oil Field, Gas Well and Refinery Workers and the United Textile Workers. Officers of the International Typographical Union and of the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers were active on the committee but these two unions did not join it. The purpose of the C.I.O. was stated to be:

to encourage and promote organization of the workers in the mass production and unorganized industries of the nation and affiliated with the A.F. of L. Its functions will be educational and advisory, and the committee and its representatives will co-operate for the recognition and acceptance of modern collective bargaining in such industries.

In January, 1936, the Executive Council of the Federation condemned the C.I.O. as fostering dual unions. A dispute as to the method of organizing the steel workers, by craft or industry, brought matters to a head and on August 4, 1936, the Executive Council voted to suspend the ten C.I.O. unions. The new members of the C.I.O. were the Federation of Glass Workers, United Automobile Workers, United Rubber Workers and the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and



Tin Workers. This action was confirmed at the Convention of the Federation in October and power was given to the Executive Council to expel any unions joining the C.I.O.

### Canada

In Canada, there are four distinct federal labour bodies-- the Trades and Labour Congress, the All-Canadian Congress of Labour, the Canadian Federation of Labour and the Confederation of Catholic Workers of Canada. The separatist movement began in 1902 with a split in the ranks of the Trades and Labour Congress. Then came the drawing together of the Roman Catholic workers in the province of Quebec into an organization of their own and finally in 1936 a division in the ranks of the All-Canadian Congress resulting in the formation of the Canadian Federation of Labour. To trace the development of these organizations, we have to go back to the 80's when industry was reviving and growing in Canada

### Trades and Labour Congress

There were formed during that decade and in the early 90's, district assemblies of the Knights of Labour in six cities and trades and labour councils in five Ontario centres and in Montreal, Vancouver, Victoria, Quebec, Winnipeg and Halifax. But before all these had been established, the Toronto Trades and Labour Council called in 1883 a convention to effect a permanent central organization. The 47 delegates were all from Ontario. Discussion ranged over a wide field but the meeting adjourned without setting up any organization. In September, 1886, there was another conference of 109 delegates, one from Quebec City, and the Trades and Labour Congress was formed. Miners and printers from Vancouver had delegates in 1890. Then Winnipeg sent a representative and in 1896 the miners' union of Nanaimo sent Mr. Ralph Smith, later member of the Dominion Parliament and President of the Congress from 1898 to 1902. In 1901, Nova Scotia was represented. Thus, slowly, the Congress took on a national character.

The 90's were stirring years in the metal mining districts of British Columbia and operators were competing feverishly. A miners' union had been organized in 1889 and others were soon formed. In 1895, the Western Federation of Miners entered British Columbia and soon had 11 locals. In 1902 it had also some coal miners' locals. But trouble in 1899 in the metal mines over hours, wages and the importing of alien labour led the Dominion Government to commission Mr. R.C. Clute, Q.C., of Toronto to investigate.

On the question of labour organization, the commissioner's report, a very thorough analysis of conditions in British Columbia, contains the following:-



I found reluctance on the part of some mine managers to recognize the unions as such. The position might be stated thus: Upon the one side, it is said, - Is the management, who are the trustees of large interests, representing in some cases an immense number of shareholders, to share this trust with an irresponsible body of men who are not even employees in the mine, the methods of which they presume to criticise and seek to control? Shall vast capital be imperilled, and perhaps lost, and the business of the country paralysed for the time being by the ill-considered action of irresponsible unions? We approve of unions within proper limits, but we refuse to hand over our mines to the control of the Union or to permit any interference with our policy or management. We will listen to complaints from the men, but will not submit to dictation by the Union--least of all a Union affiliated with the Western Federation of Miners..... On the other hand, it may be urged that mines are valuable to a country for the undeveloped wealth they contain; in the development of that wealth the whole country may be benefitted. In a new mining district, the owners of capital there invested, usually reside elsewhere, and the chief benefit to the locality, and often to the country, at all events in the early stages of a mining camp, is derived from the cost of production, wages, plant, etc., and not from the expenditure of the dividends which are usually received and spent elsewhere.....

Wage earners throughout the civilized world, believe in the necessity of organization..... to protect themselves from competition and starvation wages, and the hardships which, in most cases, ensue where there is no Union to support just demands or right grievances.....

If an establishment employing a large number of men antagonizes them at the start by refusing to recognize in any way their organization, must not this tend to irritate, annoy and finally create a breach? Where the union is not recognized, in cases of a threatened trouble, there is no one who can authoritatively represent the men. Trivial matters which a well regulated union would not permit to be made the subject of a serious dispute, are often the cause which leads to a strike. Large aggregations of capital organize and speak through one man, why should not labour do the same? Matters likely to cause friction can thus in advance be discussed by the representatives of both sides, and so, in many cases, avoided. I venture to believe that



not until there is a free recognition on the part of capital of the right of labour to organize, and when organized to speak through its chosen representative will good feeling be restored, and the basis of a permanent peace be established.

I desire to bring to your notice an instance where the utmost accord and results perfectly satisfactory to the management have been attained by full recognition of the Union. The Vancouver Coal Company of Nanaimo with a capital of 265,000 pounds sterling has been in existence since 1862, and employs 1200 men .....The Union is fully recognized and all disputes settled through its committee.

But some of the mining companies in British Columbia still refused recognition and there was a strike at Rossland in 1901. In action for damages against the local union, the company obtained judgment for \$12,500 and an injunction restraining picketing. The latter order was similar in terms to that given in England in the Taff Vale case a few months before. The result was very similar. British Columbia passed an Act to prohibit actions against trade unions for wrongful acts committed in furtherance of a trade dispute, unless the executive committee or the whole membership had authorized or concurred in such acts, and union membership in British Columbia increased.

When silver and copper mining developed in Northern Ontario about 1905 the Western Federation organized the miners there but failed to get much recognition. In 1914, it had 20 locals in Canada with 4,015 members. Changing its name to the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers in 1916, it expanded its scope to include non-ferrous smelting but its numbers declined, many of its locals in British Columbia deserting to the One Big Union in 1919. By 1934 there were no locals in Canada but in 1936 and 1937 organization was resumed and unions formed in Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia. Membership, however, has not been revealed owing to the hostility of the mine operators.

The United Mine Workers of America--the coal miners' union--entered British Columbia in 1902 and the Western Federation agreed to restrict its field to metal miners. In 1907 the Western Coal Operators' Association, including practically all of the large companies in Alberta and eastern British Columbia, made a district agreement with the U.M.W.A. which was renewed from time to time until 1925 when the operators' association was disbanded. Many of the locals broke away from the U.M.W.A. about that time and joined the Mine Workers' Union of Canada, said to be under Communist auspices, but in 1935 this organization dissolved and its locals affiliated with the United Mine Workers. On Vancouver Island, the U.M.W.A. attempted to organize the men in 1912 but were beaten in a two-year strike called in protest against the dismissal of two union men. Two of the smaller companies made settlements but the Dunsmuir Companies refused recognition. There was rioting at Nanaimo, several



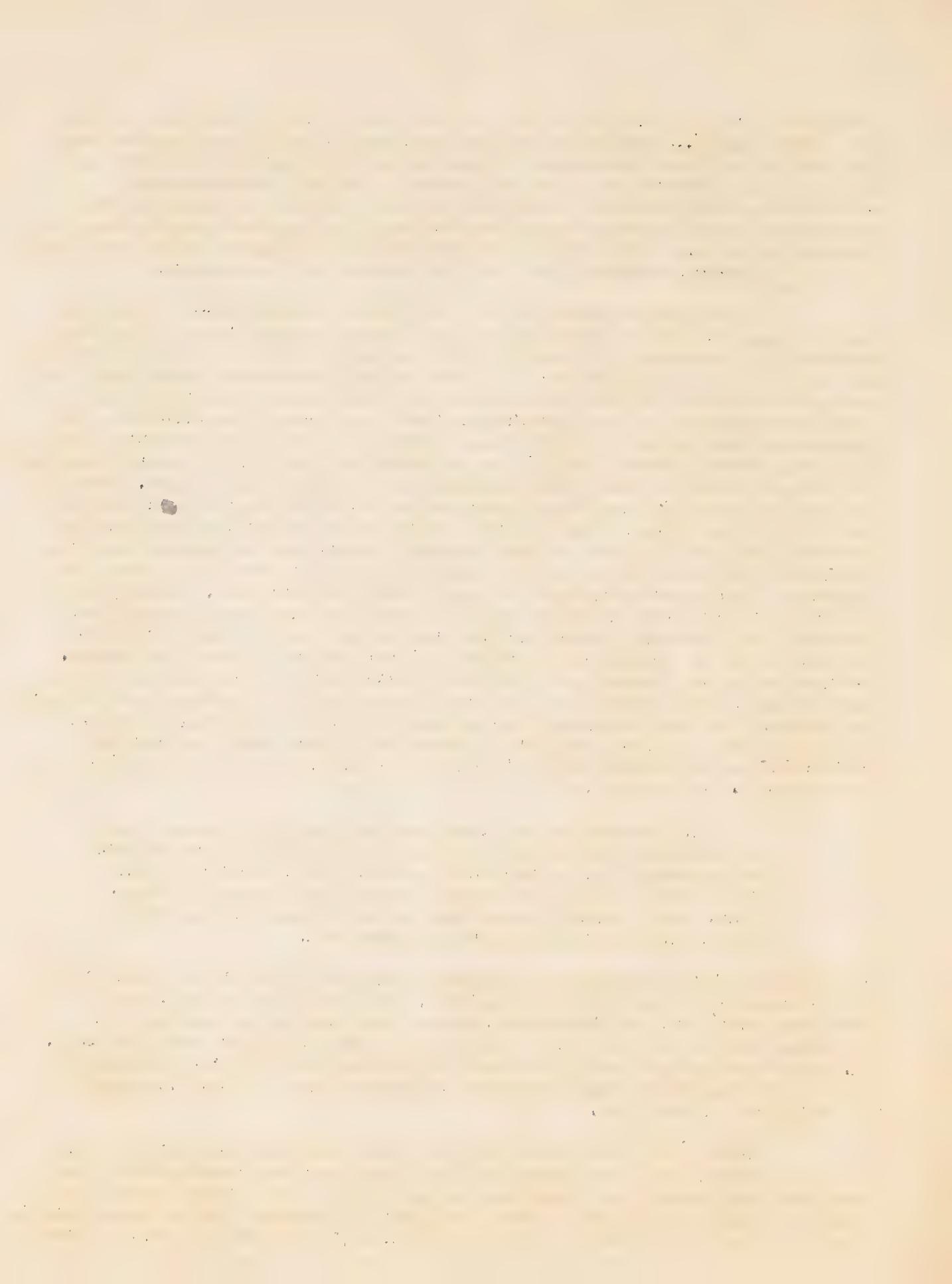
persons were injured in August, 1913, and military aid was called in. The U.M.W.A. spent about one and a half million dollars for the relief of the Vancouver Island miners during these years but were finally forced to dissolve their district organization. A Dominion Commissioner reporting on the strike recommended the enactment of a law to prevent discrimination against employees for joining a union. Not until 1936 did the union again enter the field when it secured recognition from the principal operators.

Returning to the Trades and Labour Congress-- from the beginning, the chief function of the Congress was to act for its members in pressing for legislation in the interests of the workers. At the present time, there is a provincial executive committee for each province in which there is not a provincial federation of labour chartered by the Congress, that is, except in Alberta, New Brunswick and Quebec. With these committees and federations, the Congress constitutes itself the watchdog of the legislative interests of its members in both the Dominion and provincial fields. Over a period of years it has been successful in obtaining a considerable body of legislation. But in the early 90's, with the decline in numbers and its failure to get action, there was a demand that the Congress re-organize as a national union and assume the power to organize and grant charters to any groups of workers. Resolutions to this effect were adopted and the constitution was amended to provide for federal labour unions but when a union was organized in any trade to which any members of the federal union belonged, they were to be transferred to the trade union. The action taken hardly gave full effect to the resolution and the matter was to crop up again. In his presidential address in 1901, Mr. Ralph Smith expressed the opinion that "the results of our work are not as extensive as we would desire" and there ought to be a Canadian Federation. He stated:-

A Federation of American unions represented by a national union and a Federation of Canadian unions represented by a national union, each working with the other in special cases, would be a great advantage over having local unions in Canada connected with the national unions of America.

This part of the president's address was referred to a committee for a report at the next convention. At this time, too, the Montreal and British Columbia unions were urging a campaign to organize unions to be given charters by the Congress but the A.F. of L. was organizing federal unions in Canada and did not recognize unions chartered by the Canadian Congress. So it was necessary to clarify the situation.

When the 1902 convention of the Congress met at Berlin, now Kitchener, the Committee on the Constitution recommended that the Congress should be composed of delegates from trade councils, trade unions and federal labour unions in Canada. In no case should there be more than one central body in any city and it was to have



a charter from the Congress. At that time, there were district assemblies of the Knights of Labour in some cities as well as trades and labour councils. Another clause fixing the basis of representation also excluded the Knights and any other unions in industries in which there were international unions. These resolutions were warmly debated but accepted. The Congress lost 23 organizations by this change, 12 of which were in Montreal and about half the rest in Quebec City. Thus was the Canadian labour movement divided and the Trades and Labour Congress committed to the policy of working through international unions affiliated with the A.F. of L.

But the question of the trades and labour councils was a different matter. These bodies were municipal parliaments and their interests were Canadian and not international as between Canada and the United States. The Congress took a decided stand against the attitude of the A.F. of L. in placing the Congress on the same footing with a state federation of labour and it was finally agreed that these organizations, as well as provincial federations of labour, should be chartered by the Congress but that they might also hold charters from the A.F. of L. No change has been made in this agreement.

The Trades and Labour Congress is, therefore, an organization to bring together the Canadian branches of the international unions affiliated with the A.F. of L. so that they may make known their needs in the matter of legislation.

In 1910, out of 1,752 local unions in Canada, 1,520 were internationals. After 1918, new national organizations appeared but the international trade union movement continued to lead all others. The total paid up membership of the Congress was reported in 1936 as 112,972, an increase over 1935 of 6,974. Of this number, 105,319 were distributed among the following unions--the U.M.W.A. with 16,600 members; four railway unions (maintenance-of-way men, carmen, railway and steamship clerks, freight handlers and station employees, and telegraphers) with a combined membership of 34,010; the Machinists with 7,500 members; A.C.W.A., 7,000; Street, Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employees, 6,769; Musicians, 5,000; Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers, 5,000; Ladies' Garment Workers, 4,836; Typographical Union, 4,246 and five skilled building trades (bricklayers and masons, carpenters, electrical workers, painters and decorators, plumbers and gas fitters) 14,358.

The revenue of the Trades and Labour Congress is derived from an annual tax of 18 cents per member from national and international unions. Trades and labour councils pay 36 cents per member and provincial federations \$10 a year. It is not easy to obtain figures to show the amount of money paid by Canadian members of the international unions to headquarters in the United States or the sum spent in Canada by the central treasury. In the A.F. of L. Report for 1920, probably a peak year or close to it, the payments made by 45 of the leading internationals to their Canadian locals for the previous year were given at \$835,713 and the sum received from Canada



in the same year was \$617,324.

#### Canadian Federation of Labour

When the Knights of Labour and other Canadian national unions were expelled from the Trades and Labour Congress in 1902, they at once organized a National Trades and Labour Congress. Holding their first meeting in Quebec the next year, they declared their object to be to bring together all national as opposed to international organizations. For some years the organization was made up chiefly of Knights of Labour from Quebec with a few branches in British Columbia and Ontario.

There was a federation of textile workers in Quebec affiliated with the National Congress for a time then for a year it became affiliated with the international union. Again there was a split and an independent federation. In 1907 its numbers were considerably increased but, when the textile workers in Quebec struck in 1908, there were three different organizations competing for members in the textile industry. This situation was referred to by the Dominion Commissioner appointed in that year to inquire into the numerous strikes in the cotton factories of Quebec as contributing to the unsatisfactory working conditions in the industry.

In 1908, the National Trades and Labour Congress changed its name to the Canadian Federation of Labour and, in 1910, the P.W.A. with some 5,000 members affiliated with it but, with the dissolution of the P.W.A. in 1917, the Canadian Federation lost a substantial number. In 1923, the membership was reported at 17,447.

#### One Big Union

On the international unions, the war years were also having a divisive effect. In 1918, Winnipeg locals urged the Trades and Labour Congress to hold a referendum on the question of re-organizing workers on an industrial instead of craft basis. The motion was defeated. Other resolutions from Winnipeg and Vancouver indicating political and social unrest and charging the Dominion Government with being antagonistic to labour were also turned down. The result was a meeting of 239 western labour men in Calgary in March, 1919, and a decision to break with the Congress and set up a rival organization. But before the new body could be formed came a general strike in Winnipeg originating in a strike of the metal trades for collective bargaining and for higher wages and a 44-hour week. At the same time, the building trades had ceased work on the refusal of their employers to grant higher wages. In support of the strikers, a general strike was called on May 15 and about 27,000 workmen, and later others, left their jobs. Strikes in sympathy with Winnipeg took place in Calgary, Brandon, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert. The railroad brotherhoods tried to bring the



parties together and a statement on collective bargaining through committees of employees rather than through the unions was drawn up by a mediation committee. It was endorsed by the brotherhoods and the metal trades employers as being similar to the method practised on the railways. It was also endorsed by the Minister of Labour who was a member of the Order of Railway Telegraphers. The statement did not satisfy the strike committee which claimed that the principle of collective bargaining had not been fully conceded. At the end of June the strikes were called off, the Manitoba Government promising to appoint a committee to investigate the causes of the dispute.

Meantime the One Big Union was formed to provide for industrial organization where desirable and at first it grew rapidly. The Vancouver Trades and Labour Council joined it, the metal miners of British Columbia and the coal miners in Alberta and British Columbia. Other unions in western cities and in some cities in Ontario and in the mining district around Cobalt also joined. At the end of 1919, it had a reported membership of 41,000 and in 1920 nearly 50,000 members were reported chiefly in lumber, railways, mining and textiles. But the international unions gradually regained most of their members and the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union severed its connection with the O.B.U. The only central council remaining is that in Winnipeg.

The Lumber Workers' Industrial Union was formed in British Columbia in 1919 and extended its operations to Northern Ontario. Strikes for higher wages in 1934-35 were fairly successful. In 1925, coal miners in Alberta formed the Mine Workers' Union of Canada in opposition to the U.M.W.A. and got local agreements with some companies. The Union also drew members in Northern Ontario where it competed with the O.B.U. but neither attained great strength there. An Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers was organized about 1928 by clothing and fur workers expelled from other unions on account of alleged communist activities. It had a considerable membership in Toronto and Winnipeg.

#### Workers' Unity League

These three industrial unions, lumber workers' coal miners' and needle trades', together with some local unions, established in 1930 the Workers' Unity League. Until 1932, this organization was affiliated with the Red International of Labour Unions at Moscow. Following the conviction of certain officers of the Communist Party of Canada under Section 98 of the Criminal Code, now repealed, the affiliation was cancelled. The policy of the League was to organize workers in industries in which there was little or no organization and in which wages and short time were causing much hardship. By 1934, it had central organizations of fishermen and cannery workers in British Columbia, food workers, restaurant employees, furniture and woodworkers and workers in leather, autos and textiles.



Numerous strikes were called, many being successful in raising wages and some resulting in agreements. Stratford furniture workers and Toronto chesterfield workers got considerably better conditions. Strikes of hop pickers in British Columbia and beet workers in Alberta and Ontario, almost the only strikes of agricultural workers in Canada, were partially successful.

In 1935, carrying out its new policy of co-operating with other labour organizations, the League entered into arrangements with the international unions to take over its members and in 1936 it disbanded.

#### All-Canadian Congress of Labour

The All-Canadian Congress of Labour was formed in 1927 by the Canadian Federation of Labour, the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, the One Big Union and some other national organizations. At that time it reported a membership of 46,279.

The Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees organized in 1908 at Moncton, the headquarters of the Intercolonial Railway, included station employees and other workers not engaged in train operation. In 1936, it had a membership of 11,668 covering men employed in railway shops, offices, stations and freight sheds, porters and parlor-, sleeping- and dining-car employees and men working for express companies.

In 1917, the jurisdiction of the Brotherhood was extended to the United States and it became affiliated also with the Trades and Labour Congress. But a dispute arose with the International Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks. The Trades and Labour Congress urged the amalgamation of the two unions and the president of the Canadian Union agreed to this if full autonomy was granted the Canadian membership. The dispute dragged on until 1921 when the Trades and Labour Congress revoked the charter of the Canadian Brotherhood and it became again an independent national union.

The All-Canadian Congress, like the Trades and Labour Congress, has watched the course of legislation in Canada and placed regularly before the Dominion and provincial Governments its recommendations for legislation. In 1928, it adopted a resolution for a campaign of organization on an industrial instead of craft basis.

In 1935, it reported 54,025 members in 13 national labour councils, as its local federal bodies are called, and 412 local unions. The national unions affiliated with the All-Canadian Congress are the Amalgamated Building Workers of Canada (8,760), Electrical Communication Workers of Canada (362), Canadian Electrical Trades Union (550), Canadian Association of Stationary Engineers (610), One Big Union (24,055), Canadian Printers' Union (520), Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees (11,451) and Canadian Association of Railwaymen (2,865).



Towards the end of 1936, there was a dispute among the officers of the organization and some unions broke away forming an organization under an old name, the Canadian Federation of Labour. This group included the One Big Union; the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees remained with the All-Canadian Congress of Labour.

#### Confederation of Catholic Workers of Canada

Finally, there is the Confederation of Catholic Workers of Canada. Confined almost entirely to the Province of Quebec, this organization links together 11 federations and 182 local unions with a reported membership in 1936 of some 45,000. The federations cover barbers and hairdressers and workers in asbestos, building, clothing, furniture, gloves, leather and boots and shoes, longshoremen, printing, pulp and paper and textiles.

After the split in the Trades and Labour Congress in 1902, a few assemblies of the Knights of Labour lingered on in Quebec and formed for a time a substantial part of the National Trades and Labour Congress.

In 1900, there was a lockout of boot and shoe workers in Quebec City. The employers, 22 in number, had recently organized an association and, following a strike in one factory, the others were closed down in an attempt to force the workmen to abandon their unions. The employers' proposals included a declaration by each workman that he did not belong to any union and a board of arbitration made up of a committee of the manufacturers' association. The employees refused these terms but expressed willingness to have the matter arbitrated by a joint body. In the end, Archbishop Begin of Quebec was asked to arbitrate. His award, following the instructions in the Pope's Encyclical of 1891 dealing with social problems, declared the right of employees to form associations for legitimate ends but expressed dissatisfaction with the constitutions of three of the six unions. The rules in question were changed, a permanent board of arbitration was set up and the unions consented to have a chaplain appointed to advise them.

The Papal Encyclical sums up the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards the rights of labour. The chief points of interest for us are the declaration for freedom of association, for collective agreements to determine working conditions, the duty of the state to prevent abuses in labour matters and to enact legislation to promote social justice. But, in the Church's view, economic improvement is inseparable from moral improvement and for this reason the Church must give guidance and provide chaplains for the unions.

Not until 1912, however, was a purely Catholic union set up, the first among pulp workers at Chicoutimi. During the war the number of unions, syndicates as they are called, increased. In some cases, the higher dues of the internationals appear to have been a



factor in determining allegiance. Usually, the clergy took some part in preparing the ground for union organization. A daily paper was started in Quebec, "L'Action Catholique", the object being "to implant Catholic unionism among the workers of the city and district of Quebec". Study circles were organized to give the workers an understanding of the Catholic doctrine in relation to labour.

In 1918, a Central Trades and Labour Council was formed in Quebec with 27 syndicates affiliated with it. In the same year was set up in Quebec City a secretariat of the Catholic syndicates of the district which was to publish a weekly paper, give lectures in political and social problems and aid in organizing unions and co-operative societies and give free legal advice and medical service. Delegates from 27 local Catholic unions met in Quebec City in 1918, and in 1919 at Three Rivers there were 123 delegates representing 31,000 union members. At a third meeting of 225 delegates in 1920 at Chicoutimi definite arrangements were made to form a Confederation of Catholic Workers of Canada. A constitution was adopted the following year and a chaplain appointed with the right to take part in all meetings but without the right to vote.

The National Catholic Unions are, in the main, organizations on trade or craft lines but, in some cases, they are organized by industry as among the asbestos and clothing workers. The Con-federal Bureau appoints organizers and administers the fund voted by the Confederation for organizing work. There is also a fund for assisting strikes. The French-Canadians have been considered by some as reluctant to strike and in the New England textile mills they were for some time welcomed as docile workers but they have shown both in New England and in Quebec that when they do resort to the strike, they stay with it. The Confederation, however, has advocated provision for conciliation and arbitration machinery in all collective agreements with employers.

The Confederation has taken a notable part in securing legislation, not only in petitioning for changes in the law but in drafting Bills to be presented to the Government or directly through a private member to the Legislature. One result of the Collective Labour Agreements Act sponsored by the Confederation has been the formation of new unions and the organization of employers' associations to negotiate and aid in administering agreements with the unions.

#### Conclusion.

So the Canadian labour movement shows four main divisions competing with each other to a considerable extent for members and in some cases for recognition by employers. The international unions represented by the Trades and Labour Congress in Canada and the American Federation of Labour in the United States are opposed to the organization of purely Canadian unions in any trades in which



they have unions. The All-Canadian Congress of Labour and the Canadian Federation of Labour stand for the organization of unions made up solely of Canadian workers. The chief object of the Confederation of Catholic Workers is to promote and safeguard Catholic unionism in Canada. In addition to these four central organizations, there are the railroad brotherhoods organized internationally and a few other unions, national and international, which are independent of any federal organization.









